



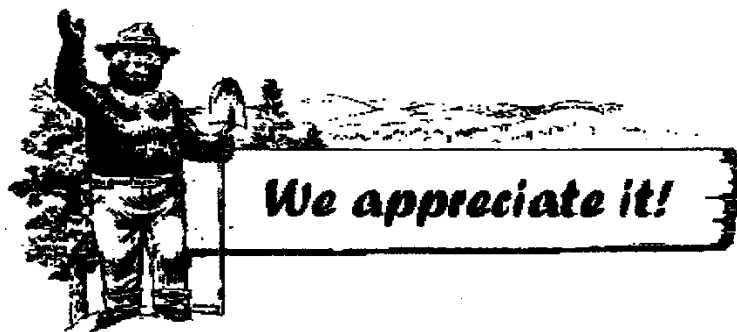
Trail Talk

January & February

2015

2015 got off to a slow start in January because of the chilly weather. Both workdays for Team Conasauga and Friends of Dry Creek were cancelled that month. However a small group from Team Conasauga did get into the wilderness for some blowdowns. The weather in February has been difficult but has provided a few great days for both groups to have excellent workdays. The weather so far this year has been dynamic, giving us glimpses of both winter and spring. Nevertheless, the great volunteers on the Conasauga Ranger District have persevered and set a good foundation for the rest of 2015.

Also, you will notice that the articles for the two workdays in February are written by volunteers who attended or lead the events, **Larry Wheat** and **Tom Blackwell**. This is greatly appreciated and encouraged. I don't believe I have formally said so in the past, but I would love to incorporate articles written by our wonderful volunteer community, whether about workdays or other stewardship topics. Also photographs would be extremely helpful. So please if you are interested, submit material to me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us and become a contributor to **Trail Talk**.

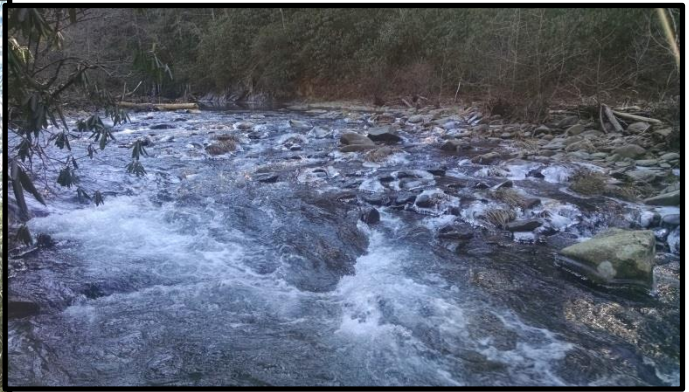


> > > > **January** < < < <

Braving the cold on Beech Bottom Trail

Photographs by Robert Edmondson

A cold blast of arctic air ultimately cancelled both Team Conasauga and Friends of Dry Creek workdays in January. Even though the formal workday for Team Conasauga was cancelled, a few that did sign up wanted to perform some trail stewardship despite the cold. **Larry Thomas, Robert Edmondson, Jim Bishop, and Wanda Brown** braved the cold on January 10th and worked on some blowdowns on the Beech Bottom Trail. I am happy to report that they cut several trees, cleared the entire trail down to the river, stayed warm, and had a great time doing it. Thank you so much for your dedication and stewardship.



> > > > **february** < < < <

Team Conasauga on the Iron Mountain Trail

By Tom Blackwell

Photographs by Wanda Brown

Fourteen members of Team Conasauga met at Cottonwood Patch Campground at 9:00 a.m. for work on the Iron Mountain Trail. Weather conditions were blue-sky perfect with a starting low in the 20s and warming up to the 50s in the afternoon. U.S. Forest Service Ranger Kevin Vasalinda gave us our briefing on the day's Iron Mountain Trail project. Iron Mtn. is a loop trail beginning at the campground and looping up to Doogan Mt and back. This trail is not in the wilderness. Primary use and maintenance has historically been by equestrians (mainly Gail Milner and Charlie Crider).



Four equestrians came out and worked: **Helen Chamberlain, James Cole, Richard & Linda Norton.** They rode out of Cottonwood Patch to reach their assignments.

On foot were **Joe Connell, Troy & Wanda Brown, David Tanner, Jim Leatherwood, Jim Bishop, Tom & Tannis Blackwell, and Larry Thomas.** Tom Blackwell celebrated his first time back having recovered from a serious accident that kept him off the trail most of last year.



We carpooled up Doogan Mtn. Road to begin work. The forest up there is dry and as we walked in to begin, winter woods were park-like, open and beautifully free of undergrowth. Some pine groves were so pretty that you would think you were in the lawn of a managed estate. On steeper slopes, we reworked existing waterbars by raking out leaves and digging trenches at an angle that facilitated diversion of rainwater to prevent the ugly and destructive washout gutters that ruin a trail. Being on the trail in winter is wonderful. We had just the right size crew for the project and enjoyed being together. We got a lot done, but much remains. Sunny corners need to be trimmed and a lot of waterbars remain to be reworked back to Cottonwood Patch. The interior section is best reached on horseback. It was a great day in the beautiful Chattahoochee National Forest.

Thank You BCHNWG Volunteers Supporting the Dry Creek Trails

By Larry Wheat



Our monthly trail improvement day was held at the Dry Creek Trail System on Saturday, February 7th. This was also the NWGA SORBA time trials event and we arranged our workday to avoid impacting the bicyclists or vice versa. Our objectives were to mow weeds and brush on a few hundred yards of trail that may be maintained only during the winter months, and to keep stream water off a short section of Trail 239. Unfortunately the DR Brush and Field mower we planned to use broke a drive chain within

a couple of minutes of use, so we have rescheduled the weed/brush cutting.

We then moved to the north end of the trail system and made a small dam to contain stream water in the stream. Due to the rather flat surrounding land, the stream had washed away one bank and considerable water flowed down the trail for about 100 yards. This is a trail design flaw caused by a decision to utilize that portion of an old roadbed. The proper fix is to move about 100 yards of trail uphill approximately 20 feet. Then the trail would have good drainage and would not be affected by any future stream overflows.

The volunteers who helped on this day were **Kathy Hansen, Louis Bondurant, and Larry Wheat**. Their past and present support is truly appreciated.

Our next general trail workday at Dry Creek is scheduled for March 21. This is not the normal first Saturday date, but the USFS Chainsaw class is the first Saturday, and the popular In Unison Farm Hunter Pace event is the 14th.

So, please reserve March 21st for the next Dry Creek workday.



Preparing for March

Photographs by Jim Holland

Jim Holland takes the removal of blowdowns from the Penitentiary Branch Trail very seriously. So when Team Conasauga planned to tackle the waterbars on that trail in March, Jim was adamant about not having any fallen trees in the way. On February 11th **Jim Holland** and **Dewey Campbell** set out on horses to clear as many blowdowns from

Penitentiary Branch Trail as possible. They encountered several large Virginia Pine crowns which is very typical of this trail. They reported that because of time constraints they had to leave a few minor deadfalls but they would be back for them to ensure the trail is clear ahead of the March 7th workday. Thank you so much for this hard work and I hope to see you both at the March workday that you have already helped to facilitate.



↑ Before and After ↓



Dates for the 2015 Workdays

March 4, 2015 - Pinhoti Work Day, contact Larry Wheat
l.wheat@mindspring.com

March 7, 2015 – Penitentiary Branch Trail (waterbars)
In conjunction with **Southern Area
Wilderness Stewards (SAWS)**

April 4, 2015 – Dry Creek Work Day, contact Larry
Wheat at l.wheat@mindspring.com

April 11, 2015 – Tearbitches Trail (waterbars)

May 1-2, 2015 – TBA / Horseshoe Bend Trail (waterbars)
(Working Weekend # 75)

May 2, 2015 – Dry Creek Work Day, contact Larry Wheat
l.wheat@mindspring.com

June 6, 2015 – East Cowpen Trail, Three Forks TH (sling
blade) (National Trail Day ®)

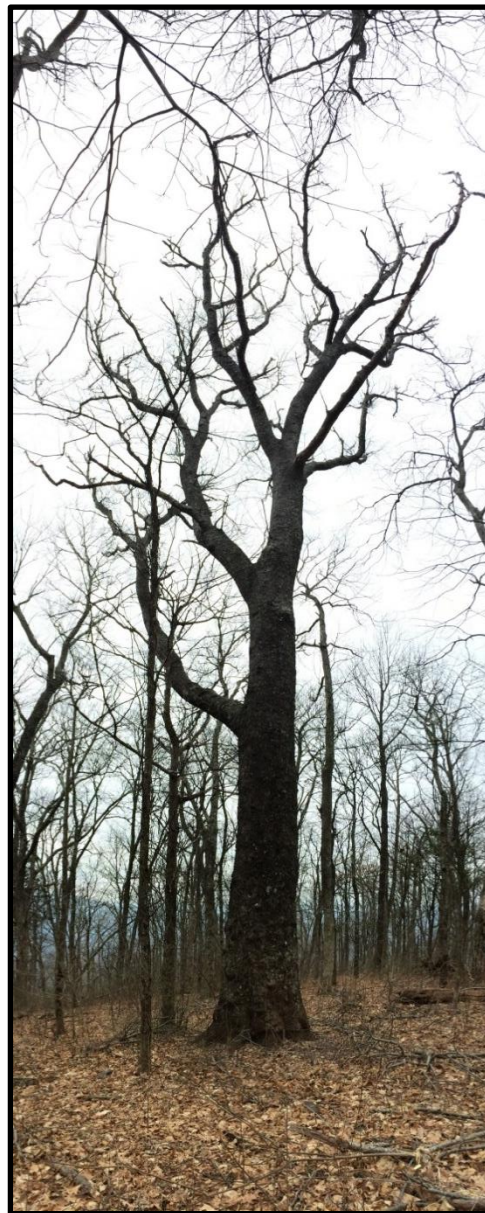
June 6, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day, contact Larry Wheat at
l.wheat@mindspring.com
(National Trail Day ®)

July 10-11, 2015 – Rough Ridge Trail (sling blade)
(Working Weekend # 76)

July 18, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day, contact Larry Wheat
l.wheat@mindspring.com

August 1, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day, contact Larry Wheat
l.wheat@mindspring.com

August 8, 2015 – Lower Jacks River Trail
(campsite maintenance)



2015 Volunteer Training Opportunities

March 7, 2015 – Chainsaw Certification

May 9, 2015 – Crosscut Certification

For more information contact **Karen Larsen** at
706-695-6736 or kalarsen@fs.fed.us



For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations committed to helping us provide a safe, enjoyable trail experiences for our forest users....

Team Conasauga: www.teamconasauga.org or www.facebook.com/teamconasauga

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA):
www.nwgasorba.org

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Ellijay Mountain Biking Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

Southern Off-Road Bike Association (SORBA): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org

Co-Trails: www.cotrails.org

Any interested people
please contact me at
kvasalinda@fs.fed.us.
Thanks and see you on the
trail.

~Kevin~

